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Horse Safety Guidelines

U.S. Department of Agriculture -- Extension Service

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U.S. Department of Agriculture -- Extension Service,
in cooperation with The National Horse and Pony Youth Activities Council.

HORSE SAFETY GUIDELINES

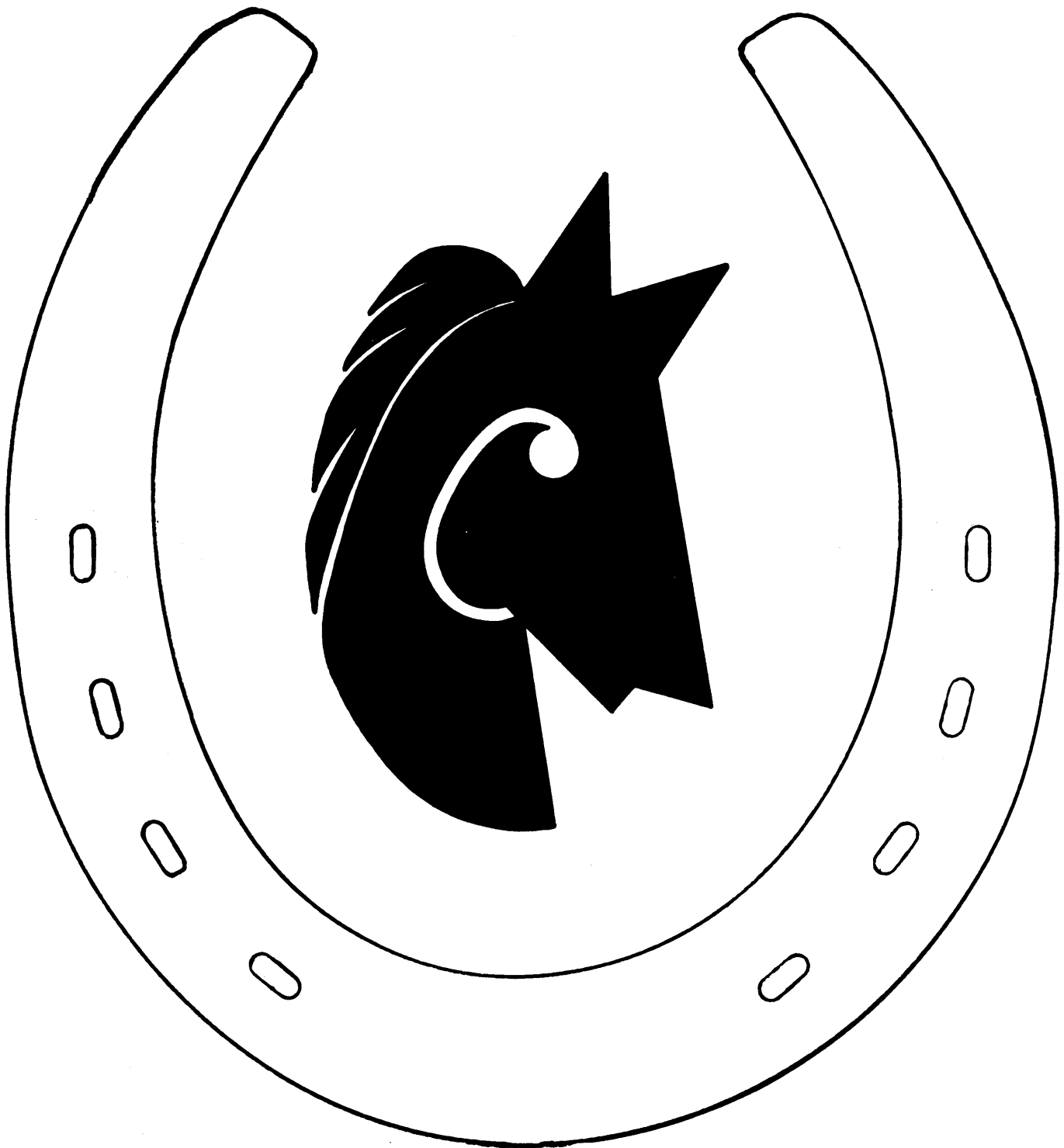


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(Issued February 1970)

HORSE SAFETY GUIDELINES

Introduction

The purpose of the National Horse and Pony Youth Activities Council is to help coordinate youth horse activities to obtain maximum benefit of the horse for developing youth.

Since disregard of simple safety in handling horses can result in serious mishaps, knowledge and application of safety to riding is imperative to the purpose of the Council. Thus, the Council has developed guidelines to promote the safe use of the horse in an effort to improve the value of this animal in service to youth and society in general.

The membership of the National Horse and Pony Youth Activities Council consists of people with an active and sincere interest in the field of horses and youth by virtue of the positions they hold with major national horsemen's organizations or with national and/or State Cooperative Extension Service programs where their participation is recognized as having influence beyond State boundaries. Charter members of the Council are as follows:

American Quarter Horse Association

- Box 200, Amarillo, Texas 79111

Appaloosa Horse Club, Inc.

- 12390 West 58th Avenue, Arvada, Colorado 80002

International Arabian Horse Association

- J-B Arabians, Eastsound, Washington 98245

Pony of the Americas Club, Inc.

- P. O. Box 1447, Mason City, Iowa 50401

American Saddle Horse Breeders Association

- 929 South 4th Street, Louisville, Kentucky 40203

The American Paint Horse Association

- 2525 Ridgmar Boulevard, P. O. Box 12487
Fort Worth, Texas 76116

Welsh Pony Society of America, Inc.

- 1770 Lancaster Avenue, Paoli, Pennsylvania 19301

The Morgan Horse Club, Inc.

- Leominster, Massachusetts 01453

Pinto Horse Association of America, Inc.

- 5621 Butter Gridge, Canal Fulton, Ohio 44614

Shetland Pony of America

- P. O. Box 2339, Lafayette, Indiana 47906

American Horse Shows Association

- 527 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10022

Equestrian Trails, Inc.

- P. O. Box 2622, Culver City, California 90230

American Association of Sheriff Poses and Riding Clubs

- 1318 West Euless Boulevard, Euless, Texas 76039

U. S. Pony Clubs

- Pleasant Street, Dover, Massachusetts 02030

National Extension Horse Committee

- Joe Johnson, Chairman, Washington State Univ., Pullman 99163

Federal Extension Service

- USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250

Larry Spielman

- Route 2, Box 296, Eugene, Oregon 97401

John Huyler

- c/o Thacher School, Ojai, California 93023

Mona Betts

- Circle Two Ranch, Parker, Colorado 80134

Bill Culbertson

- Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado 80521

Allen Richardson

- Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado 80521

Membership in the Council is encouraged. However, to insure continuity in the present sincerity of the membership to do what is best for youth, new members will have to be approved by the charter membership.

The role of the Council is advisory and the adoption of Council recommendations by member associations is strictly voluntary.

No preference for or discrimination against any individual breed of horse or organization is intended by the Council.

I APPROACHING

1. Always speak to a horse when you walk up behind him. Coming up behind a horse unexpectedly may cause him to kick you and result in serious injury.
2. Never approach a horse directly from the rear. Even in single stalls it is possible to approach from an angle.
3. Pet a horse by first placing your hand on his shoulder and neck. Don't dab at the end of his nose.
4. Always walk around your horse out of kicking range. Never walk under the tie rope or step over it.

II HANDLING

1. While working around horses, stay in close to the horse so if he kicks, you will not be struck with the full impact of the kick. Stay out of kicking range whenever possible.
2. Know your horse, his temperament and reactions. Control your temper at all times, but let him know that you are his firm and kind master.
3. Always let the horse know what you intend to do. For instance, when picking up the feet, do not reach for and seize the foot hurriedly, as this will startle the horse and is liable to cause him to kick. Learn the proper way to lift the feet.
4. Learn simple means of restraint, such as crosstyng in the open.
5. Tie horses with approximately two to three feet of rope, or a distance equivalent to the length of the neck, at the height where the lead shank attaches to the halter. Don't stake them out.
6. Work about a horse from a position as near the shoulder as possible. In this way, you cannot be touched by either the front or hind feet of the horse.
7. Be calm, confident, and collected around horses. A nervous handler causes a nervous, unsafe horse. This is also an important factor in showmanship.

8. Know your horse's peculiarities. If someone else is riding him, tell them what to expect.
9. Never tease your horse. He may develop bad and dangerous habits the rest of his life. If so, your safety is in serious jeopardy.
10. Do not punish your horse except at the instant of his disobedience. If you wait even a minute, he will not understand why you are punishing him. Punish without anger, lest your punishment be too severe. Never strike your horse about the head.
11. Never work with the horse's tail from a position directly behind. Stand near the point of the buttock, to the side, and facing the rear. Hold the tail by pulling it around to you.

III LEADING

1. If the horse resists when being led and hangs back on the end of the rope, turn him to one side and lead him a few steps forward before touching him with your hand.
2. Walk beside the horse when leading him, not ahead or behind him. Always turn the horse to the right and walk around him.
3. If the horse rears up, release the hand nearest to the halter so you can stay on the ground. Move to the side to pull the horse down. Do not stand in front. Horses sometime strike with the front feet when rearing. Use a long lead strap folded "accordian" style in the left hand while leading. Always lead from the left or "near" side using your right hand to hold lead. Extend your right elbow slightly toward the horse so that if the horse makes contact with you, his shoulder will strike your elbow, thus, moving you away. The elbow can also be used in the horse's neck to keep his head and neck straight for control as well as preventing him from crowding the handler.
4. The horse is stronger than you, so don't try to out pull him. He will usually respond if properly halter-broken to a quick snap on the lead strap or rope.
5. Never wrap the lead strap, halter shank, or reins around your hand, wrist, or body.

6. When leading into a box stall or pasture, turn the horse so that he faces the door or gate before releasing the lead strap or removing a halter or bridle. Otherwise he is likely to bolt forward before he is released.
7. Don't try to show a green horse. Teach the horse at home, and not in the show ring.

IV TYING

1. Tie your horse far enough away from strange horses so they cannot fight.
2. Always untie the lead shank before taking the halter off your horse. This may prevent him from pulling back and becoming a "halter-puller".
3. Keep leads and longe lines off the ground to prevent entangling your feet or the horse's feet.
4. Learn to handle a rope before carrying one on a horse. Always use caution when working with a rope if the horse is not "rope broke". Never tie hard and fast to the saddle horn while using a rope off a green horse.

V BRIDLING

1. Protect your head from the horse's head when bridling. To do this, stand in close just behind and to one side (preferably left side) of the horse's head. Using this method, the neck action of the horse would push the handler clear if he threw his head or tried to strike to avoid the bridle.
2. Avoid bridling a nervous horse in close quarters.

VI SADDLING

1. Stand with your feet well back in the clear and reach forward when saddling the mount.
2. In using a double-rigged saddle -- remember, fasten front cinch first, rear cinch last; but when unsaddling a horse, be sure to unbuckle the rear cinch first. Failure to do so can "spook" your horse and cause a bad accident. Also, be certain the strap connecting the front cinch and back cinch (along the belly) is secure.

3. When saddling, be careful to keep cinch ring from striking the off knee. The back or flank cinch should not be loose enough for the horse to get a hind leg caught between the belly and the cinch.
4. Swing the saddle into position easily -- not suddenly. Dropping the saddle down quickly or hard may scare the horse.
5. Check your cinch three times: (a) after saddling; (b) after walking; and (c) after mounting.

VII MOUNTING

1. Never mount the horse in a barn, near fences, trees, or overhanging projections. Sidestepping and rearing mounts have injured riders who failed to take these precautions.
2. Adjust saddle carefully and cinch tight enough so it will not turn when mounting. Check after untracking and soon after starting to ride, dismount, and again tighten the saddle girth. Horses often swell up when first saddled, and failure to tighten girths later can result in serious accidents.
3. Train your horse to stand perfectly still while mounting and dismounting. Do not allow him to whirl or even turn away from you while mounting and dismounting.

VIII RIDING

1. If your horse is frightened by an obstacle, steady him; give him time to overcome his fear. Then ride or lead by the obstacle. Do not punish him unless absolutely necessary.
2. Keep your horse under control and maintain a secure seat at all times. Horses are easily frightened by unusual objects and noises. Anticipate these and steady your horse.
3. When a horse is frightened and attempts to run, turn him in a circle and tighten the circle until he stops. However, be sure the footing is safe before attempting this procedure of gaining control of your horse.
4. Hold your mount to a walk when going up or down hill.
5. Reduce speed and allow horse to pick his way when riding rough ground or in sand, mud, ice, or snow where there is danger of the mount falling or slipping. Maintain a steady hold on the reins, but do not guide the horse.

6. Avoid paved roads. Slow your mount to a walk when crossing such roads. If he is spirited or a young horse, consider dismounting and leading him across only if the horse is easily handled during mounting.
7. Never rush past riders who are proceeding at a slower gait as it startles both horses and riders, and frequently causes accidents. Instead, approach slowly and pass cautiously on the left side.
8. Never ride off and leave mounting rider alone.
9. Do not ride too close to the horse that is in front because of the danger of kicking. Stay abreast or a full length behind other mounts.
10. Walk the horse when approaching and passing through underpasses and over bridges.
11. When your horse is too full of steam, work him on a long longe line a few minutes before riding. (This is not recommended for roping horses.)
12. Walk the horse to and from the stable. This keeps him from running home and refusing to leave the stable.
13. Watch and make sure excess latigo strap does not work loose and drag. The horse may step on the latigo or it may hang on something, scaring the horse and causing him to injure the rider.

IX RIDING AT NIGHT

1. When riding at night, allow the horse more freedom of judgment. His senses are much keener than yours.
2. When riding at night on roads or highways, follow the same rules as for pedestrians. State laws vary in regard to which side of the road to ride on. Most require that you ride on the left side so approaching traffic will be in the lane next to you. Wear light colored clothing and carry a flashlight and reflectors. Check your State regulations for details.

X EQUIPMENT CARE

1. Bridle reins, stirrup leathers, headstalls, curbstraps, and cinch straps should be kept in the best possible condition, since your safety is dependent on these straps. Replace any strap when it begins to show signs of wear (cracking or checking). All tack should fit the horse.